

DeCordova works magic of imagination



'BIRD DISASTER': Leslie Bostrom's paintings explore environmental snafus.

Past the top of the stairs at the DeCordova Museum, a dusky garden is in full bloom. Glowing purple blossoms gleam among soft orange buds that twinkle like fireflies in the hushed darkness. "In each of my installations, I try to capture a sense of magic and excitement," Beth Galston said of her "Luminous Garden #2 (Night

Visual Arts

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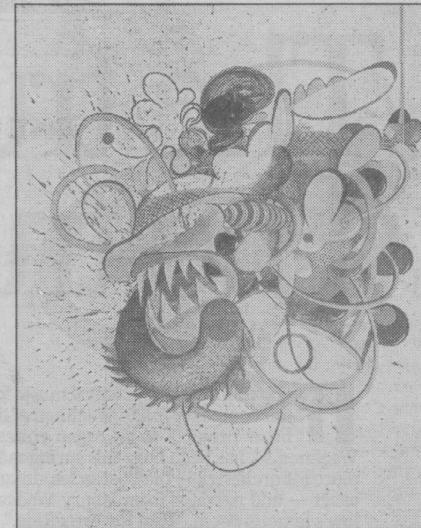
Meadow)," "to create a place that invites viewers in and leads them on a journey, delighting the senses and provoking the imagination."

As one of a dozen artists selected for this summer's DeCordova Annual (through Sept. 5), Galston fits right into the spirit of the Lincoln museum's yearly exhibition. Since 1989, this eagerly awaited ritual has showcased the work of a group of contemporary artists from New England. Rather than focusing on a particular medium, theme or style, the Annual has beckoned visitors to meander through a series of one-person shows. Connections emerge, nevertheless, in both the look and the ideas of the pieces on view, thanks to the careful arrangement

of the art by the DeCordova's skilled curatorial team.

The most unlikely resonance occurs in a hallway of photographs. There, Toru Nakanishi's golden abstractions of ramen noodles encounter the mysterious atmospheres within Mary Lang's landscapes. If Nakanishi has transported ordinary food into a mythic realm, Lang has similarly removed the usual clues to the natural world. Mist, ice and sky merge in unusual combinations in such vistas as "Bremerton, WA, I," with its seamless fusion of water and clouds.

Henry Kaufman and Brian Knep both have fashioned new media installations based on the sensation of touch. When a viewer presses a hand against the image of a nude torso on the curved screen of Kaufman's "The Lightness of Your Touch," a reaction begins. The abdomen pulses, and the



ALL TEETH: Hybrid creatures are among the works at this summer's DeCordova Annual.

handprint flutters with the airiness of an autumn leaf before disappearing into the fleshy depths. Knep's "Healing #1" responds to the human step instead. A person walking across this dynamic carpet interrupts the lighted pattern of red and green squiggles. Slowly the design re-establishes itself, but with slight alterations — as if a scar had formed upon its surface.

Assaults upon nature have inspired the tragic scenes of Leslie Bostrom's "Bird Disaster" paintings. On a monumental scale, Bostrom explores the cataclysmic results of human actions on the environments of birds. "Alas!" captures a robin and her eggs tumbling out of the nest as a lumberjack fells their tree. "Black Muck Dead Duck" merges a cartoony bird with an apocalyptic vision of a sinking tanker. It is a very short leap from these ornithological threats to a more generalized

After the anxiety of such pieces, the spare serenity of Sandy Litchfield's fragmented landscapes provide a welcome haven. Composed directly on the gallery walls, these Asian-influenced works hint at the broad vistas of maps, as well as the tiny elements found on actual nature walks. "What interests me most about the concept of place is one's engagement with it," Litchfield has said, and in her art she has produced places that are quietly riveting.